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TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR PHUM KPAO PINS PTER SU
SUBJECT: GITMO DETAINEE RELATIVES, ACTIVISTS PROTEST

REF: KHARTOUM 1298

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: About 25 demonstrators gathered outside the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum on August 19 to protest the continued detention of nine Sudanese citizens held in Guantanamo Bay. The demonstration included six relatives of the detainees who carried photographs of their family members. Approximately a dozen riot police encircled the demonstration, which remained peaceful and ended after 30 minutes. Sudanese and international journalists covered the event.
END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) At approximately 11:30 a.m. on August 19, about 25 individuals, many carrying photographs and signs in support of the nine Sudanese being detained at Guantanamo Bay, demonstrated in front of the Embassy's main gate. The protest was organized by family members of the detainees. Although the protest was peaceful, police in riot gear encircled the protestors as a precaution.
(NOTE: There have been additional police deployed in the vicinity of the Embassy in recent days in response to a terror threat aimed at Western interests (reftel). END NOTE.) Six family members of the detainees were present and carried photos of their relatives. PAO stepped out onto the street where the protest was taking place and listened as protest organizers read English and Arabic communiqués. Organizers also provided PAO with what they said were signed petitions (English text attached paragraph 5) from Guantanamo Bay detainees' relatives and some 5,000 supporters. PAO accepted the documents and responded by saying that the protestors' message would be conveyed to Washington. The Embassy will forward these documents to Washington via pouch.

¶13. (U) There was Sudanese and international press coverage of the event on Aug. 19 and 20. Both Sudan TV and Al-Jazeera, as well as Reuters, were present at the demonstration. The independent "Al-Ayaam" carried the story on its front page with a photo and the accompanying headline, "Khartoum demonstrates for the release of the Guantanamo detainees." The article stated that the detainees have been in Guantanamo Bay for more than five years and that the Sudanese government "announces from time to time that the detainees will be released, without designating a definite time." According to the article, this situation forced the families of the detainees to organize the protest.

¶14. (U) The "Al-Ayaam" article also repeated that Minister of Justice Muhammad Ali Mardi announced that the U.S. authorities would release Al-Jazeera TV cameraman, Sami Al-Haj, in the next two to three weeks. This report follows Mardi's appearance on Al-Jazeera on August 18 where he made similar comments. Last week, the Sudanese press also reported that a senior-level delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by State Minister Al-Samani El-Wasila was invited by the U.S. to visit Washington before the end of this month to discuss the release of Al-Haj. [COMMENT: The Sudanese expectations for Al-Samani's scheduled trip to Washington appear to be very high, even if the release of Al-Haj is not up for discussion. END COMMENT.]

15. (U) BEGIN TEXT:

"Civic Aid International Organization

Important Notice

The participants of this demonstration are composed of the Civic Aid International Organization members and the representatives from the families of the nine Sudanese detainees in Guantanamo who want to present their earnest request to the administration of the United States of America.

Their request entails the immediate release of the detainees or their immediate free and fair trial that can unveil all the accusations that you have against them, if there is (sic) any.

Our Organization backs the request of these families and five thousand Sudanese signatures that hopes from the Foreign Ministry of the United States to open up a wide range of diplomatic talks with the Sudan government in order to determined (sic) this issue completely as what had happened to the other similar Arab countries before.

Due to the pathetic situation that the families of these detainees lives (sic) for more than five years, the participants of this demonstration here by anticipates, these families will be able to contact with their detainees sons, brother, and fathers as well as enabling the detainees to enjoy their basic legal and judicial rights that are mentioned in the international humanitarian law and human rights.

At the same time, our organization would like to draw the attention of the United States Administration that a group of American advocates who represent the Sudanese detainees in Guantanamo and other advocates who volunteered themselves visited recently to Khartoum and went back with them the enough (sic) legal evidences and the political will of the Sudan government that affirms the possibility of those detainees to come back to their mother country while enjoying all their basic rights and freedoms as per stated in the constitution." END TEXT.

POWERS